Food security and proper distribution of foodgrains

3083. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting of State Food Secretaries was held in New Delhi recently to discuss food security and the modalities for identifying the poor under the food security schemes;

(b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether Government is aware that foodgrains are not being distributed properly; and

(d) if so, the corrective action taken thereon, till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Government proposes to enact the National Food Security Act.

Under the proposed law, every Below Poverty Line (BPL) family is to be entitled to received 25 kg of food grains per month. Details of eligible BPL families to be covered, methodology for their identification, issue of targeted identification cards to them etc. are yet to be firmed up. In order to frame the proposed law, Government has initiated necessary action to examine of different aspects of the proposed law. Consultation with State Governments, various Central Ministries, experts and other stake holders is presently in progress. A meeting was held with the State Food Secretaries at New Delhi on 10th June, 2009. The State Governments have been requested to furnish comments/suggestions on the proposed law on National Food Security. So far comments from 18 State Governments have been received.

Targeted Public Distribution (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Government of India and State/UT Governments. The Government of India carries out procurement of foodgrains for the TPDS, their storage, transportation and bulk allocation to the State/UT Governments. The responsibilities for lifting of the allocated foodgrains, their allocation within State/UT, identification of eligible BPL and AAY families based on estimates of Planning Commission, issuance of ration cards to them, and supervision of distribution of allocated foodgrains to eligible ration cardholders through fair price shops rest with the State/UT Governments. Therefore, complaints received from time to time regarding malpractices in distribution-are sent to concerned State/UT Governments for inquiry and appropriate action under the law.

The Government has initiated a series of measures to streamline TPDS by:—

i. continuous review of lists of BPL and AAY families and ensuring timely availability of foodgrains at fair price shops;

ii. ensuring greater transparency in functioning of TPDS;

iii. improved monitoring and vigilance at various levels;

iv. introduction of new technologies such as Computerization of TPDS operations at various levels, smart card based delivery of essential commodities; and

v. getting periodically evaluated functioning of TPDS.

Commission to PDS shop-owners

3084. SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that owners of Public Distribution System (PDS) shops are receiving abysmally low commission;

(b) if so, the details and reasons in this regard; and

(c) the steps Government proposes to take to revise the commission of PDS shopowners so as to minimize pilferages etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) In order to maintain supplies and securing availability and distribution of essential commodities under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001, has been notified by the Government of India on 31st August, 2001. As provided under this, State Governments regulate functioning of Fair Price Shops (FPSs). For each FPS, a licence is issued and certain number of ration card holder families is attached to it. The State Governments issue foodgrains to Fair Price Shop licensees which they distribute to the attached rations cards holders.

In order to enable State/UT governments to increase the commission of the Fair Price Shops (FPS) licensees, since 2001 they have been given flexibility in fixing the commission.

Further, to make operations of fair price shops economically viable, the State Governments/UT Administrations have been advised to allow FPS licensees to enlarge basket of commodities sold by them by allowing sale of non-PDS items of daily use as per local requirement. By end of June, 2009, it has been reported by 23 State/UT Governments that the FPS owners are selling non-PDS items like edible oil, pulses, vanaspati ghee, milk powder, baby food, soaps, exercise books, butter, tea iodised salt and tooth paste, etc.

Rice and wheat at cheap rate

†3085. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether providing of rice and wheat at cheap rate of Rs. two/three per kg. has been implemented across States in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the names of States with number of people and rate at which rice and wheat being provided to them;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.